

World Literature, Indian Views, 1920s–1940s

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Abstract

“For any given observer,” David Damrosch argued in *What is World Literature?*, “even a genuinely global perspective remains a perspective *from somewhere*, and global patterns of the circulation of world literature take shape in their local manifestations.” Within world-system approaches that fix centres, peripheries and semiperipheries, or with approaches that consider world literature only that which circulates transnationally or “globally,” the relativizing import of this important insight remains inert or gets forgotten. As Indian editors and writers in the early decades of the twentieth century undertook more translations of foreign works and discussed the relationship between India and the world, overlapping understandings of world literature emerged in the Indian literary field. This essay explores three different visions of world literature from the same region and period but in different languages – English, Hindi, and Urdu – highlighting their different impulses, contexts, approaches, and outcomes in order to refine our notion of location. And whereas much of the recent debate and activities around world literature has revolved around the curriculum or around publishers’ series and anthologies, in the Indian case exposure to and discussion of literature from other parts of the world took largely place in the pages of periodicals.

Keywords

world literature – location – India – Hindi – Urdu – English – periodical

1 Located Views

“For any given observer,” David Damrosch argued in *What is World Literature?*, “even a genuinely global perspective remains a perspective *from somewhere*, and global patterns of the circulation of world literature take shape in their

local manifestations” (27). Within world-system approaches that fix centres, peripheries and semi-peripheries, or approaches that consider world literature only that which circulates transnationally or “globally,” the relativizing import of this important insight remains inert or gets forgotten. Yet, to paraphrase another of Damrosch’s formulations, the concept of world literature has *an effective* life only when it fulfills some specific, located agenda(s). As we note in the Introduction to this special issue, by location we mean both a location in time and place (*desh-kal*, to use Indian terms) as well as an intellectual or political perspective. So, as Tagore’s example illustrates (see Peter McDonald’s contribution), even claiming that literature transcends time and place *is* the product of a particular location, a local or broader dialogue, in Tagore’s case with nationalism and the emerging discipline of comparative literature in India. Such an understanding of location and perspective rejects the notion that there exists a “Greenwich meridian of world literature” acting as a standard reference to the “here and now” of world literature (Casanova), and considers this notion as itself a product of the “one-world thinking” that imagines and naturalizes the world “as a continuous and traversable space” (Mufti 5).

This essay understands location in three different ways: as a physical and geo-political location (India in the early twentieth century); as a particular language world (English in India, Hindi, and Urdu); and as a platform and a medium (the journal or magazine). It shows that, as Indian editors and writers in the early decades of the twentieth century undertook more translations of foreign works and discussed the relationship between India and the world, different visions of world literature emerged from the same region and period (the same *desh-kal*) but with different impulses, contexts, approaches, and outcomes.

My first lens in this essay is the medium. Whereas much of the recent debate and activities regarding world literature has revolved around the curriculum or around publishers’ series and anthologies (Damrosch *Teaching World Literature*, Mani), in the Indian case exposure to and discussion of literature from other parts of the world largely took place in the pages of periodicals, as Zecchini’s contribution to this volume also shows. This forces us to think how this medium was part of the message: what kind of experience of world literature did English, Hindi, and Urdu periodicals create? Did the medium of the periodical, its “cut and paste” relay logic (Hofmeyr), its reliance on short forms (the review, the short note, occasionally the poem or the short story) and on fragmentary, occasional, token offerings produce a particular experience of world literature – a vague kind of familiarity? How is such an experience different from the more systematic ambition of the book series and the course? If the periodical is my first lens, language is the second. Should we understand the

difference between the English, Hindi, and Urdu examples as directly related to language – English as the colonial, cosmopolitan or global language, and Hindi and Urdu as regional vernaculars – or rather to the particular agendas within each linguistic and literary sub-field?

If gestures towards world literature – whether in the form of translations, news, surveys, introductions – always have the effect of making parts of the world, literary and non literary, visible or invisible, then early-twentieth century Indian periodicals in English, Hindi, and Urdu made Asia visible and relativized the centrality of English vis-à-vis other European literatures. (By contrast, African and Latin American literatures only became visible to Indian readers in the 1950s and 1960s.) Looking for world literature in these periodicals shows that already in the late colonial period English had become a medium rather than the paragon of literariness. It also shows that – despite its poor reputation in Translation Studies – relay translation through English became very much the norm.¹ But whereas Itamar Even-Zohar's model of translation flows, recently revalued in world literature debates (Moretti) posits a strongly hierarchical relationship between the literature that translates, that which gets translated, and the language used for translation, the relay translations we see in the Indian periodicals suggest in fact a conscious decentering of English literature.

Finally, despite the fact that the metaphor of the race between nations was widely employed in Indian discourses of modernity, Indian periodicals of the early twentieth century presented and discussed world literature more in terms of redressing the asymmetric balance and exchange between East and West (Zecchini in this issue) and discovering the plurality of the world, rather than of “catching up” with the latest productions and trends from the “centres” (Casanova). In this respect, they differed from the “global simultaneity of literary experience” (Holt 89) and the “accelerated transmission of essays and the short story” that Indian as well Arabic journals offered in the 1950s, which “respatializ[ed] world literary time” (Rubin 59). Arguably, this was not just a question of the much greater scale of funding (whether by the USSR, the Chinese state or the CIA) but also of perspective and agenda. In early-twentieth century Indian periodicals, world literature was more about discovering the world and finding one's place in it than about creating fronts and alignments. Nonetheless, as Zecchini's contribution also shows, finding one's place in the world meant also *claiming* one's place in the world in what was at the same time an internationalist and a nationalist stance.

1 The same was true of course for most translations of Asian poetry into European languages, see Powys Mathers.

2 “Thick” and “Thin” Knowledge, World Literature and The Periodical

In *Gandhi's Printing Press*, Isabel Hofmeyr has called the periodical and pamphlet “the forms of empire par excellence. A cut-and-paste assemblage of publications from elsewhere, the periodical on every page convened a miniature empire” (13). This was only partly due to financial constraints.² Whereas daily newspapers aim at circulating in circumscribed areas, be they cities or nations, “[p]eriodicals, by contrast, are not tied to one place and are intended to circulate widely” and at a slower tempo. “Their modes of production are less date-driven, and they rely more on the undated excerpt, essay or clipping, taken from other periodicals” (14). “Periodicals fashioned from these exchange papers carpeted empire, creating endless textual intersections that constituted part of the fabric of empire life itself” (16).

In colonial India, in a period when higher education and books (apart from schoolbooks, tales, religious songs and theatrical pamphlets) were both still expensive and only the preserve of a few, journals were the main conduit of new literature, including foreign literature. They reproduced, gave echo and some fixity to important but occasional and fleeting interventions like speeches. Such was the case for instance of Tagore's famous speech on *viśvasāhitya* or world literature at the Indian National Council of Education in February 1907, published the same year in his journal, *Baṅgadarsān*.

Hofmeyr is interested in Gandhi's use of the periodical and pamphlet as promoting a culture of slow-reading that “could enlarge new kinds of radical selves” (3). Instead I am interested in periodicals for how, and how much, they made world literature visible (or invisible) to their Indian readers in ways that clearly crossed and exceeded the spatial imagination of empire. How did the “cut-and-paste,” fragmentary but often repeated nature of notices, “gleanings,” reviews, articles, and translations create familiarity with foreign authors' names, book titles and literary trends – yet usually without systematicity?³ Did periodicals produce a “thick” knowledge and encounter with world literature, in the form of detailed essays and commented translations, or was the knowledge they provided “thin,” amounting to a few notions, generalisations, and textual fragments without context? What different experience of world literature do “thick” and “thin” encounters produce – intimacy, familiarity, vague recognition? Which foreign authors, books, and literary phenomena did these

2 “[D]aily newspapers and hardback books presuppose considerable resources in the way that weekly periodicals and leaflets do not;” (Hofmeyr 13).

3 There are of course exceptions, such as Miraji's translation project below.

periodicals give space to, what particular views of the world did they produce, and what agendas did they advance, either explicitly or implicitly? Monthly periodicals, in India as elsewhere, acted as crucial nodes in the circulation of news and ideas between Indian and foreign periodicals, but also within India across English and Indian languages (see also Zecchini in this issue). How much of the literature, authors, and debates in Indian languages did these periodicals cite? To what extent did they become conduits for the imagination of Indian literature? And how did they position Indian literature within the emerging world literature?

2.1 *The Modern Review: Snippets of World Literature*

Hofmeyr notes that Gandhi in his *Indian Opinion* specialised in providing summaries – the “art of condensation,” he called it (17). And it is often as snippets in the periodicals – the short “cut-and-paste” Book Reviews and Notes section, or the summaries from Indian and Foreign periodicals, including literary news and speeches at conventions – that world literature was called into being in early-twentieth-century India, as Zecchini also shows in the case of *The Indian PEN*.

Ramanand Chatterjee’s (1865–1943) *Modern Review* (1907–1995) was an important English-language monthly edited from Calcutta that acted as a veritable clearing house for articles and news coming from abroad and from across India, and for reflecting India in and to the world. The monthly spoke to and for the emerging national English-educated Indian middle class and reflected Bengali-English bilingualism, though it also referred to other Indian languages. As a result, it was critical of calls to adopt Hindi or Hindustani as the future national language in place of English.⁴

The *Modern Review* was not a literary journal, and its “thick” coverage of the world was more political and economic.⁵ The “world” was more likely to appear in the guise of articles on the Revolution in Persia, Political tendencies in Chinese culture, Education in Japan or in Sweden, or reprinted notes on Egypt’s plea for independence (May 1920 585, from *Boston Magazine*) or Korea’s rebellion against Japanese rule (May 1920 582, from *New Republic*).⁶ Among the

4 See, for example, S. Ganguli, “Indian Nationality and Hindustani Speech” (*MR* April 1913 195–200).

5 It also regularly carried articles by the eminent historian Jadunath Sarkar and art historians A.K. Coomaraswami and Stella Kramrisch.

6 Six articles on Japan in 1920 alone, including one on “Japanese opinion on the Turkish question” reprinted from the *Asian Review* (*MR* May 1920 580).

FOREIGN PERIODICALS

George Sampson writes in the *Bookman* with deep insight and sympathy about

Some Russian Novelists.

We make a few extracts

The father of literary nationalism is undoubtedly Gogol (1809-1852), whose satire on serfdom in his

novel, "Dead Souls," and on bureaucracy in his comedy, "The Inspector-General," contributed much to the public education. Satire is a slow solvent, but a certain Gogol's broad, good-natured humor may have had no other conscious purpose than itself; but laughter is a terrible weapon, more deadly than argument. You begin by laughing at a powerful institution, and you end by laughing it out of existence.

LAFCADIO HEARN: AN APPRECIATION

BY F. HADLAND DAVIS,

AUTHOR OF "MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF JAPAN," "THE LAND OF THE YELLOW SPRING AND OTHER JAPANESE STORIES" ETC.

IT is probable that more books have been written about Japan than any other country, but few will deny that out of that vast accumulation of publications the work of Lafcadio Hearn is pre-eminent. When we survey his twelve books devoted to the study of the Land of the Gods—from those first glowing impressions in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* to his critical masterpiece *Japan: An Interpretation*—we are conscious of having come in touch with one who has not only told us more about Japan than any other writer, but who has at the same time presented his material in a rich, poetic and sensitive style

that he was too much under the influence of Herbert Spencer; but the fact remains that whatever his faults may have been, he is the supreme interpreter of Japan and his work, with all its rapture and ghostliness, will never be superseded.

I am inclined to agree with Mr. Yone Noguchi when he observes that "you must have another Hearn to understand Lafcadio Hearn." His character was so sensitive, so wayward, so eerie, so child-like, so wrapped about with mystery that no one so far has been able to describe him with any degree of completeness. We can fathom his genius to a certain extent, but the man

Thomas Mann

This year's Nobel Prize for literature has been awarded to Thomas Mann, the great German writer. An account of his works and personality appears in *Current History* for January:

Undoubtedly Germany's greatest living writer today, a number of his works have appeared in English translation in the United States, and his American publisher (Knopf) is legitimately jubilant over this official and international confirmation

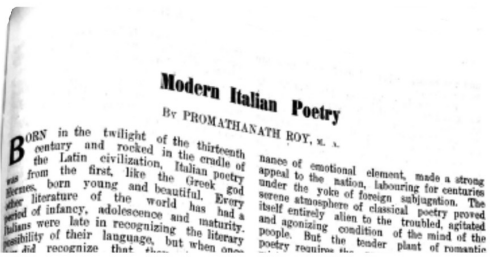


FIGURE 1 Snippets from the *Modern Review*
SOURCE: INTERNET ARCHIVE

foreign periodicals it quoted were the *Asian Review*, *The Japan Magazine*, and *Philippine Review* – the focus on Asia is unmistakeable and striking in comparison with *The Indian PEN* (see Zecchini’s contribution). In fact, in the pages of the *Modern Review*, the world appeared expansively as non-Europe rising against imperialism. “Not one country alone but the whole world is awakening,” waxed eloquent Labour politician and future Gandhian Wilfred Wellock in January 1913 in a kind of planetary ode:

Mankind universally is developing a new self-consciousness. From one end of the earth to the other, signs of a new birth are manifest. A new and grand vision of life has come upon all the nations of the earth as if it were a mighty picture spread out around the dome of the vast, illimitable sky, and with its coming a new hope has been kindled in the heart of every people on earth.

WELLOCK 1

"What it is, this awakening, no one has yet ventured to say" (Wellock 1), he continued, yet concluded that everywhere "there are to be seen indications that workingmen, the common people, are rising in revolt against the dictatorship of the wealthy and the privileged" (4). "Not unnaturally the eyes of all Indians are today turned towards countries like Turkey, China and Persia," wrote N.H. Setalvad from London, "where the peoples left free from the dominating influence of European nations in search of countries to exploit, have been developing a marked desire to evolve for themselves one kind of representative government or another" (Setalvad 132). Equally, the *Modern Review* followed closely foreign reports on Indian politics and the work of European Orientalists.⁷ It also regularly translated Rabindranath Tagore's poems and speeches and enthusiastically championed his recognition as "The Poet Laureate of Asia" wherever he went.⁸

By comparison, literary coverage remained largely European, more occasional and largely as snippets, or in the form of reprinted articles and notes. "Always paraphrasing and summarizing but never quoting directly or translating," authors and readers can convey and experience the worldliness of world literature "outside the translation zone," as Wen-Chin Ouyang has shown through the example of the Egyptian writer and intellectual Taha Husayn, who discussed a profusion of ancient and modern authors and texts north and south of the Mediterranean in his essays and books (Ouyang 28). The same can be said for the articles and notes in the *Modern Review* which, apart from short stories and poems from Bengali, very rarely published translations.⁹

7 The *Modern Review* regularly reproduced articles and news about Indian literature and art from foreign periodicals, highlighting its recognition on the international stage; see the two articles by B. on "Sanskrit scholarship in the West" (*MR* June and July 1907), E.B. Havell's "Indian Art at the Oriental Congress" (*MR* Oct 1908), B.D. Basu's "The Propagation of Hindu Literature" (*MR* Aug 1911), "German Interest in Indian Culture" (*MR* May 1922), W.D. Allen's "India in New York's Art Fair" (*MR* Dec 1933), and the notes "Dr J.B. Anderson on Bengali Literature" (*MR* Nov 1920, quoting the *Times*), "Contemporary India in Norway" (*MR* Jan 1921), "Indian Art in French Exhibitions" (*MR* Feb 1921).

8 *MR* Jan 1921 97.

9 In line with the point above, under the title "A Swedish Poet's Longing for India," a poem in

Rather, foreign authors were mentioned and their contribution refracted through a few words of critical introduction. Turgenev is “that Russian of the Boulevards,” Dostoevsky “is important in the history of Russian liberty less for what he wrote than what he suffered.” This essay (see Fig. 1. above), excerpted and summarised from the *Bookman*, also mentions Gogol, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Cuprin, and Artzibashev.¹⁰ News of winners of the Nobel Prize for literature also appeared as snippets, reprinted from other sources (see Fig. 1).¹¹ Far less systematic than the coverage of international politics, sometimes thrown in *en passant* in articles on other themes, these snippets nevertheless created *familiarity* with literatures beyond English. “In Henrik Ibsen’s *Pretenders*, two rival claimants to the throne, Haarkar and Skule, fight with each other. But before they do so, they meet, and the following conversation takes place,” wrote one anonymous Note, using dialogues from Ibsen’s play to illustrate a point about imperial policy.¹² Later, during World War II, we also see the first examples of foreign literature articles provided by the countries’ ministries or information bureaux.¹³

This “thin knowledge” or superficial familiarity should not be underrated. Writing about world literature teaching at Harvard University and musing whether it would work in India, Bengali educationist Benoy Kumar Sarkar anticipated objections:

It may be asked whether we in India who have not read, either in original or translations, the works of the writers of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, would be benefited by reading a book of criticism like Polyesen’s “Essays on Scandinavian Literature”. Similarly it may be said that there is no use or benefit in studying Pollak’s “Franz Grillparzer and the Austrian Drama”, when many of us do not even know the name of an Austrian writer.

MR Jan 1922 97

the original and in English translation by Gustaf Froeding (Trans. B.D. Kelkar) was published in MR April 1943 256.

10 “Some Russian Novelists,” MR April 1918 422, see Fig. 1.

11 One announced the Spanish Benevente as the rumoured choice for the Nobel prize in 1920 (he got it in 1922), while another one announced the actual recipient, the Norwegian Knut Hamsun; both were taken from “a paragraph” in the American *Literary Digest*; MR Sept 1920 343, and Feb 1921 274.

12 “Divide and impera and National Unification,” MR April 1918 551–2.

13 See P. Budnitskaya, “Soviet Short Story in 1942,” MR April 1943 297 (provided by the Soviet Information Bureau), and the articles on “China’s Wartime Literature and Literary Trend” and “Wartime Chinese Drama,” MR July 1943 20–23 and 24–26 (provided by the Chinese Ministry of Information).

Yet, he counteracted, “such an opinion is held only by those who consider the literature of criticism to be subsidiary or secondary to, or dependent upon, any other form of literature.” Instead, “this kind of literary criticism is like a chapter in the history of civilization” (*MR* Jan 1922 97). Thus, thin knowledge and superficial familiarity could be connected to the growing importance of literary criticism as an independent form of writing and of teaching about the world.

The first article in the very first issue of the *Modern Review* had expressed the wish that English should become for Indians the door to modern world-thought, which it explicitly coded as modern *European* thought: “The thought of Europe, *which is in reality world-thought*, can be approached by any one of four languages,” English, French, German or Italian, educationist W. Knox Johnson had said before the convocation of Allahabad University in 1905 (Johnson 5, emphasis added). Yet the door into the “city of Knowledge” had so far remained shut because in India the study of English was largely instrumental (“bread-study”) and book-sellers sold Indian readers only textbooks, books by English literary nobodies, or “worthless” contemporary fiction instead of choice translations from European literature (12). What was lacking, Johnson argued, was “intelligent guidance,” which he proceeded to offer by dropping a profusion of “un-English names” (Diderot, Vauvenargues, Goldoni, Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Dante, Manzoni, etc.). He also suggested that reading the biographies or the “autobiographies of great men ... would be one of the best ways for an Indian to attack modern literature” (16).

Ironically, the *Modern Review*, I would argue, took up the challenge precisely in Johnson’s style, i.e. not through translation or close engagement but rather through name-dropping, creating a thinner and more distant familiarity. While making literature beyond English visible, its coverage, particularly of Asian literature, was far more limited than Miraji’s (see below).

The *Modern Review* played a much more active role as a conduit of news about Indian-language literature and publications, and showed a keen interest in folklore (see Zecchini). Though clearly closer to Bengali, it regularly reviewed new books in other Indian languages – particularly Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, and more rarely Urdu, Tamil, Kannada and other South Indian languages –, including translations *across* Indian languages (Fig. 2 below).¹⁴ When it discontinued the Indian book reviews, it received so many letters of protest that it had

14 For instance, new Hindi translation of Bankimchandra’s *Anandmath* as *Bande mataram* by Kunwar Kamalanand Singh (*MR* Jan 1907 117), or the Gujarati translation of *Selections from the Greek Lives of Plutarch*, by Balwantrai K. Thakore (119) and of Emerson’s *Essays* (*MR* Feb 1920 172).

KRISHNAKANTA'S WILL (A Novel). By *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee*. Translated from the Bengali by *Dakshincharan Roy*, Translator of "*Sornalala*". *Sen, Ray & Co., Booksellers and Publishers, Cornballis Building, Calcutta. Price Two Rupees.*

The book has been neatly printed in big clear type on thick antique laid paper of good quality. This translation of Bankim Chandra's "*Krishnakanta's Will*" appeared serially in the "*Modern Review*". The readers of the Review are, therefore, already aware of the quality of the work, and will be glad to have it in book form. The style is clear, and free from any cumbrousness, making the book interesting reading.

DIABETES AND ITS DIATETIC TREATMENT. By *Major B. D. Basu, I.M.S. (Retired). New Edition, Re. 1-8. Panini Office. Allahabad.*

This book has gone through many editions within a few years. Its value is now established. It contains many original views and observations. It is of use not only to practitioners, but to patients as well. The latter can regulate their diet according to instructions contained in it. In the present edition a chapter on diabetes has been newly added.

X.

MARATHI.

GERMANICHE PATALYANTRA. Published by *Mr. P. S. Bhas, Girgaon, Bombay, Pp. 202. Price Rs. 12.*

This is a translation of a popular English book '*The Secrets of German War Office*' by *Armguard Karl Graves* who describes himself as '*Late Spy to the German Government*' and published by *T. Warner Laurie* of London. Mr. Bhas has issued this translation as No. 17 of his series—*The Bharat-Gaurav Granthamala*. He is to be congratulated on his placing before Marathi readers this remarkable series of

which his work is now working for the world.

Only ten chapters of the original book are made in this translation. The last two chapters are left out. They deal with the German War Machine. The exploits of Graves really come to an end with the tenth chapter.

S. B. ARTHUR.

GUJARATI.

MALABARI NAN KAVYATRA (मलबारी नान काव्यत्रा), published by *Pheros Bhatnagar, Mumbai. Printed at the Nirnaya Sagar Printing Press, Bombay. Cloth bound, pp. 279. Price Rs. 12 (1917).*

Which cultured Indian does not know the name of Mr. B. M. Malabari, the social reformer per excellence, now gathered to the dust? He is known to many of us in various other capacities, and among them chiefly as an indefatigable and bold writer in Parsi by birth and education, he was a Hindu at heart. In sentiments, in his expressions of his sentiments when he did so on paper and in Gujarati, it was difficult to distinguish him and his writings from a Hindu and the writings of a Hindu born and bred. He was equally at ease while writing on the life and poems of Dayaram, or on the excesses of the *Malabari* Malabarajas. Both prose and poetry flowed from his pen with equal facility and facility. He was as charming Gujarati as English, and it was a matter of great pride to his Hindu literary friends to consider him as one of them. This collection of Malabari's poems comes very handy. They are lying scattered in several books, and it was convenient to reach them in that form. They are 184 in number, and range over the widest possible subjects from love and Nature, to patriotism and social reform. Morals and Religion also find a place here. While following the style of some well-known Gujarati poets who wrote in Hindi or Urdu, their own mother tongue, he has essayed some poems in Hindi or Hindustani (Urdu). His poems possess great merit. They lay open his heart and mind.

FIGURE 2 Reviews of books in Indian languages, *MR* Feb 1918

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SOURCE: INTERNET ARCHIVE

to resume them.¹⁵ The *Modern Review* also reprinted articles on modern trends in these literatures and reported on events like the meetings of the Bengali Literary Conference, the Hindi conference in Calcutta in 1921, or the search for Hindi manuscripts.¹⁶ Arguably, it was through these reviews and notices that a sense of common, national literary endeavor emerged.

The reports themselves stressed this commonality among modern Indian literatures. Writing about a textbook collection of Gujarati poems, the reviewer deplored that that it had been printed in Gujarati type. Had it been printed in Nagari script,

- 15 "Owing to urgent requests received from many quarters, we have decided to resume the publication of the notices of vernacular books. Books in the following languages will be noticed: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Panjab, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu and Sindhi." "To the Authors and Publishers of Vernacular Books" (*MR* March 1921 432). However, books in South Indian languages were reviewed less often, e.g. *MR* Oct 1921 473–5.
- 16 See "Maratha Historical Literature" (*MR*, Jan 1907 104–111); "Bengal Literary Conference" (*MR* March 1910 299–300, May 1911 539–40), "Hindi conference in Calcutta" (*MR* April 1921 562); Zecchini makes a similar point for *The Indian PEN*. In fact, the *Modern Review* also reported on P.E.N. meetings – e.g. on the Indian representative at the international meeting in Paris (*MR* July 1936 108) and in India (Bombay, *MR* April/May 1936).

cultured readers throughout India would have at once recognized several poems, sentiments and ideas familiar to them as those of the great English masters, common to the Gujarati and English pieces. We have seen similar poems in Bengali, breathing the same sentiments, and our Bengali brethren would at least have felt the common element, and seen also how English education is leavening the whole mass in India in this matter, as it is doing in several others.¹⁷

MR Feb 1907 224–5

A column on folk-tales also projected this commonality of Indian literature: folk-tales allowed local particularities to be valued while also framing them in national and universal terms, a point often made over several issues of the *The Indian PEN* in the late 1930s.¹⁸ In the *Modern Review*, then, we can see an early example of English as a channel of Indian literary relations – its articles and notes were regularly picked up by journals in other Indian languages.¹⁹

English clearly acted as channel in the case of foreign literature, too, and though the *Modern Review* did not invest specifically in world literature, its general thrust was to decenter colonial English and open to the wider world. Name dropping, brief mentions, and short notes all created familiarity without direct contact, outside the “translation zone” (Apter, Ouyang).

2.2 *Hindi and World Literature, World Literature in Hindi*

If the English *Modern Review* worked as intermediary between India, Asia, and the world, and across the different Indian language-literatures, the first book on world literature in Hindi, Padumlal Punnalal Bakhshi's (1894–1971) *Viśva-sāhitya* (World Literature, 1924) conceived of world literature in very different, much more normative and civilizational, terms, though its origin, too, was in a series of articles in the most prestigious and authoritative Hindi monthly *Sarasvatī* (1900). Born in a small princely state in central India, Bakhshi was an outsider to the Hindi literary world, and his appointment in 1920 at the young age of 26 as editor of *Sarasvatī* raised several eyebrows.²⁰ At the time it was

17 *Kavya Madhurya*, by Himatlal Ganeshji Anjaria, M.A., Assistant Superintendent, Municipal Schools, Bombay (1906), reviewed in *MR* Feb 1907 224–5.

18 As Ramanand Chatterjee himself pointed out in “Bengali elements in Telugu folklore,” reprinted in *MR* Nov 1920.

19 The Hindi monthly *Sarasvatī*, which clearly followed the *Modern Review*'s model, often quoted its articles and news, and was published by the *Review*'s original publisher, see Ali, Orsini.

20 Indian Press employee and future editor Devidatt Shukla recalled in his autobiography

still rare for a Hindi editor and writer to have a B.A. degree, with its implied familiarity with the English literature canon. Bakhshi was widely read and translated Dickens (*Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *A Christmas Tale*, *David Copperfield*, *Pickwick*, *A Tale of Two Cities*), Balzac (*Eugenie Grandet*), Alexandre Dumas (*Black Tulip*), Gorky (*Mother*), and Hardy (*The Mayor of Casterbridge*) into Hindi.

Viśva-sāhitya was an ambitious book for a relatively young Hindi journal editor to write. While it registered post-World War I internationalism and brought Bakhshi's familiarity with English and European literature and criticism to bear upon Hindi readers, the book was more concerned with defining literature and drawing civilizational comparisons. It sought to place Indian literature on a par with the literary traditions of other world civilizations, with chronology and comparison underwriting the attempt. Its chapters on the foundation and development of literature, on poetry, drama, and science, on "literature and *dharma*," "the meeting of literatures," and "world language" all began by laying out the very terrain and intrinsic qualities of literature. Bakhshi engaged in textual criticism and comparison in only a few (and familiar) cases of "great writers" such as Kalidasa, Shakespeare, and Dante. For the most part what he provided was a "thin" knowledge of names and periods. Yet this does not make his effort to make Asian (largely Chinese) or non-English European literature *visible* to his Hindi readers less significant, only the attempt seems more important than the knowledge or familiarity it produced.

Bakhshi also used world literature to intervene in the current redefinitions of literature within Hindi. This redefinition, which stressed the social usefulness of literature, its universality *and* national (*jatiy*) specificity at the same time, took different forms according to the particular branches of literature. Here I will focus on the chapter on drama because, like poetry (*kavya*), it was an area in which India could boast an illustrious ancient tradition, with its own aesthetics theory, therefore disproving arguments about Western diffusion and Indian "lack." Theatre was also an area of intense current experimentation and debate within India: how could a modern Indian theatre be developed by combining Indian and Western elements (see Dalmia) that would be of high quality, bring about social and political reform and progress, and raise actors and managers to social respectability (unlike the traditional communities of performers)? At the same time, and it is useful to keep this context in mind when we read Bakhshi's

that, "after [Mahavir Prasad] Dvivedi left, we more or less stopped receiving articles, and we had to write two, three articles for each issue ourselves" (qtd in Orsini 386).

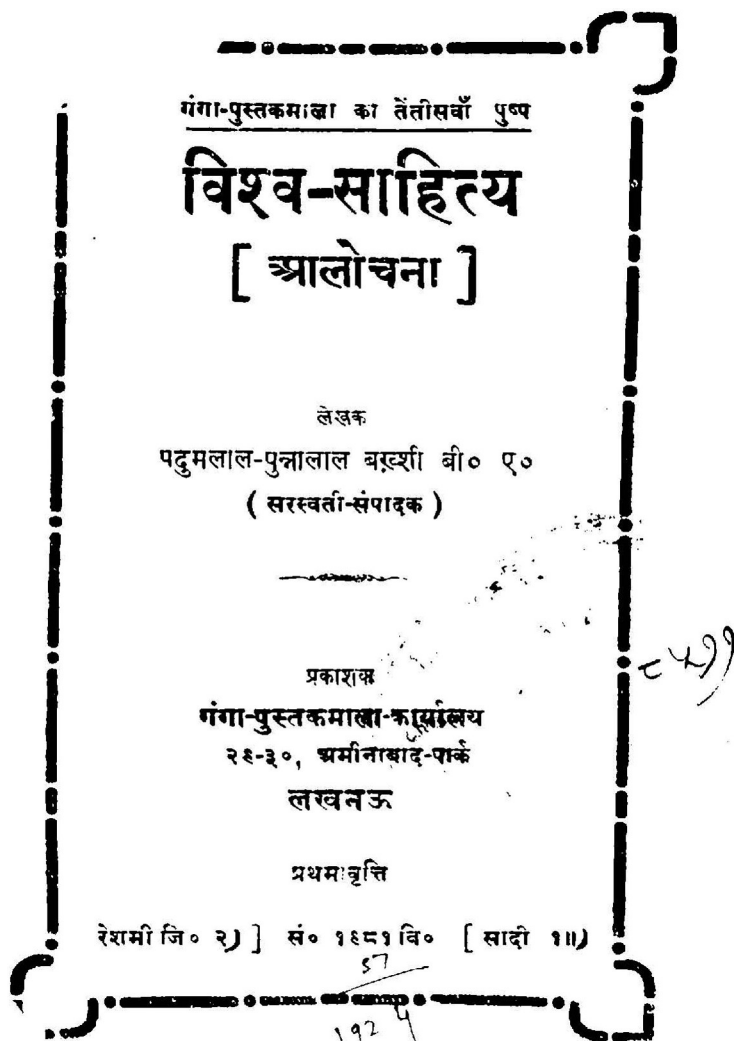


FIGURE 3 Cover of P.P. Bakhshi, *Viśva-sāhitya*, Lucknow: Ganga Pustakmala, 1924
SOURCE: INTERNET ARCHIVE

discussion and what it makes visible and what it occludes, successful commercial theatre companies had emerged in modern Indian cities and toured widely within and outside India (Hansen). This commercial Parsi theatre did in fact mix European elements (the proscenium stage, curtains, sets, costumes, and melodrama) and Indian ones (poetry, song, dance and narratives, see Kapur). Yet critics and literary playwrights took a dim view of these commercial companies and saw them as a threat to the creation of a high-minded, respectable

and reformist modern Indian theatre. In Hindi, the split between commercial *staged* theatre and *literary* plays that were never performed was particularly acute.

In the introductory chapter on “The foundation of literature” (*sāhitya kā mūl*), Bakhshi tried to negotiate between the peculiar character of each community and/or nation (the term used is *jāti*, here synonymous with Volk), historical change and historical and geographical specificities of literature (*desh-kāl*), and the universal values of literature.²¹ He oscillated between the poles of variety (*vaichitrya*) and similarity (*sāmya*), and between emphasising location and arguing that “true” literature transcend it: “The true poets are beyond time and place. While drawing upon time and place, dwelling within them and using the tools they provide, they create ideals that are fitting for every time and place” (Bakhshi 139).²²

Bakhshi started off from a premise of internal change and diversity: “The character [*svarūp*] of literature is always changing, and different ideals are created in different periods. We can find in literature the same diversity [*vaichitrya*] and complexity [*jaṭiltā*] that we find in human life” (15). He also made the important point – at variance with Indian nationalist discourse of the time – that change, or more precisely the rise and fall of a *jāti*, do *not* correspond to the rise and fall of its literature.²³ But when it came to individual national literatures, his argument veered towards internal homogeneity and specific “national feelings,” which in the case of India were implicitly coded as Hindu.²⁴ He returned to this point in the chapter on “The meeting of literatures” (*sāhitya kā sammilan*), which also took a civilizational approach. Tracing histories of contact, he started with the “close relations” between India and East Asia in Buddhist times, took in contacts between India and Greco-Arab culture, knowledge transfers between the Abbasids and Persophone courts and between Islamic Spain and Southern Europe, before turning to the development of knowledge and science in Europe (Bakhshi 38–47). “The literatures of all countries have each their characteristics due to their religious, moral, and political conditions, and each keeps changing, though their basic feeling [*bhāvnā*]

21 “What is the reason behind the creation of literature? Can literature be created against *desh* and society? Does a poet not disregard *desh-kāl*? Or is literature created in accordance to *desh-kāl*?” (Bakhshi 15). All translations from Hindi and Urdu in this article are mine.

22 Literatures are similar when they portray the “true character of humankind” (Bakhshi 153).

23 “Oddly, we find that when a *jāti* is fallen, that’s when excellent literature is created, and when a *jāti* has reached its peak of glory is when literature has lost lustre ...” (Bakhshi 15).

24 Indian and Hindu are used interchangeably in the book, e.g. “Hindu playwrights” (Bakhshi 139).

remains" (Bakhshi 52).²⁵ Interestingly, his insistence on national specificity made him accept only conditionally Goethe's statement about *Weltliteratur*:

In modern literature all the countries, while maintaining their different peculiarities, are coming towards each other. A kind of world literature is being created which, however, does not neglect national affects, nor does the peculiarity of any country disappear. The famous German poet Goethe once imagined this kind of literature. By weaving together the different countries and nations with the thread of unity through this kind of literature, he wanted to spread the basic mantra of "*vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*" [the whole earth is a family].

BAKHSHI 63

Yet, Bakhshi noted, "It is very easy to say that we are all human beings [*manushya*] and this whole earth [*vasudhā*] is a family, but to bring this feeling into action after arousing it in one's ear is difficult" (Bakhshi 62). This oscillation between national and civilizational peculiarities and human commonality returns in the chapters on poetry and drama (though Bakhshi often quotes novels to illustrate his arguments in the other chapters, he has no chapter on fiction). Bakhshi began each chapter with a broad definition and outlined "first principles" with a universalist flavour; he then traced *Indian* (i.e. Sanskrit) origins; undertook civilisational comparison (e.g. between Sanskrit and Greek drama); and introduced Hindi readers to summary surveys of literatures they did not know about (Chinese and Japanese in the case of drama). For the modern period he focused largely on Europe, where he switched more confidently between English and European authors and history.

So, in the chapter on drama he began by defining acting as a common human impulse (in the inner world or *antahkaraṇ*) that then finds expression in different forms requiring skill and craft, rather than with literary texts (Bakhshi 144). The different terminology and etymology of Sansrit *nāṭaka* vs Greek *drama* (which, he argued, corresponds more closely to Sanskrit *rūpaka*) led Bakhshi

25 "We see that while they may be similar in all other respects, those countries retain a variety or specificity which cannot be destroyed in any way. And it's that variety or specificity that we can see in literature, too. You cannot have [Washington] Irving in England, or Dickens in America. The reason is the condition of the country. And in countries which are different from each other in all respects, literature will take very different forms. *Similarity will be only at the level of those affects that relate to the human jāti*" (here in the sense of humankind) (Bakhshi 53, emphasis added).

to an extended contrastive comparison between the two, in which he argued that Greco-European theatre is based on character whereas Indian drama on “nature” (147). In an imaginary argument against those who would place Greek tragedy at the origin of world drama, Bakhshi argued that there is no evidence that the Indians acquired theatre from the Greeks and instead traced its genealogy back to Vedic dialogues. Continuing the comparison, he pointed out that India had the most ancient theory of drama, “Hindu” drama has no theory of unity and no tragedy, and theatre in India had religious approval and was performed at religious festivals, unlike Christian Europe where theatre and actors were viewed with suspicion (Bakhshi 144–46).

From here on, the “world literature” perspective turns this rather predictable self-definition of India against Europe in a new direction. Collating third-hand gleanings from the *Modern Review* and other sources, Bakhshi drew up a chronological survey of theatre in China and Japan.²⁶ Here the book provided what I have called “thin knowledge,” i.e. it offered a profusion of details and names which, in the absence of “textual contact” through translation (or “visual contact” through illustrations), evoked the *existence* of Chinese and Japanese drama rather its *substance*. Readers learnt that Chinese theatre is divided into four precise ages (720–907, 960–1119, 1125–1357, 1368–1449), after which it “declined,” and that Noh is different from Kabuki. The contrast with Miraji’s Urdu translation-essays below is striking.

When it came to modern European drama, Bakhshi was on much surer ground, and he provided a confident and nuanced account, i.e. much “thicker knowledge.” In his chronological account he foregrounded the centrality of theatre to British and European culture (*sabhyatā kā pradhān aṅg*), its recognition among the elites, some of which embrace acting,²⁷ and its great popularity, particularly in the democratized nineteenth century, which produced grand theatres and elaborate scenes and costumes.²⁸ He spoke knowingly of the commotion caused by Ibsen and his Irish pupil G.B. Shaw, noted the different tastes of British and continental audiences and the more recent symbolist drama of

26 His comparison to leading actor May Lang Fong to Mary Pickford (Bakhshi 150) led me back to the unattributed Gleaning “Chinese plays, real and false” in *MR* Sept 1920 285–286.

27 This is clearly an important point, which he brings up also in relation to Japan, where emperor Veji [sic, Meiji] started to consider theatre only after contact with Europeans; as for England, Bakhshi notes that several aristocrats enjoy acting, even Princess Louise of the royal family (158).

28 Bakhshi (157) is once again attentive to common points with India, like the division between successful stage plays (often comedies, or French, or both) and literary dramas by Browning or Tennyson, which have not been staged successfully.

Maurice Maeterlinck and W.B. Yeats, and did not forget to mention the staging of Tagore's plays in London (Bakhshi 160).

It was, I think, with the Hindi theatre scene in mind, that Bakhshi ended his chapter by proposing some "rules" that synthesised old and new, East and West. First, there should be unity of story and action (*ākhyān-vastu*). Second, every action should be meaningful and include counter-actions and dilemmas (as in Bhavabhuti and in Ibsen's *Enemy of the People*). Third, drama *can* include supernatural events (as in Shakespeare and Kalidasa). After all, he added, even modern European theatre could be Naturalist (Zola), Romantic (Hugo), or Idealist, trends synthesized by playwrights like Ibsen who emphasized psychological dilemmas (Bakhshi 160). Bakhshi's fifth rule was that, *pace* Sanskrit dramatists, protagonists should not always be paragons of virtue, partly because to show *dharma* defeated does not mean to lessen it, and partly because this is what happens in reality. Finally, theatre should aim at social and political reform and not be mere entertainment. A synthesis *is* possible – individual freedom, which in the modern age seeks to transcend *desh-kal*, and the greater complexity of modern life and of human character can lead to social harmony and progress, without hiding the dark sides of civilisation (Bakhshi 162–67). A remarkable statement!

In short, Bakhshi's "world" was, as always, selective, and in the absence of textual and visual examples, the more distant literatures remained rather vague, factual details notwithstanding. "World" comparison was largely in terms of "classical" traditions, where each civilisation could shine for some time. For the modern period, instead, the question of local or Indian modernity remained fraught, and contemporary Indian theatre is practically absent from Bakhshi's account. Although he gestured positively towards its "resurgence" in Bengal and Maharashtra, he remained completely silent about contemporary theatre in Hindi or in the South, or commercial theatre, whether Parsi or regional forms (Nautanki, Tamasha, Lavani, Yakshagana, etc.). His stern critique – "its vices are so evident" (that they don't need to be even mentioned) – contrasts with his appreciation of the commercial success of theatre in Europe. This reformist approach and its national and civilizational discourse, which privileged the classical and invisibilized the regional, supposedly bolstered Hindi's claim to "represent" Indian literature, to speak for the nation and also to be, metonymically, the nation.

3 World Poetry on Radio Waves: Miraji's Urdu Translations

The distant familiarity of the *Modern Review's* gleanings and Bakhshi's chronological and civilizational approach contrast sharply with what we may call the direct *literary approach* of the Urdu poet and translator Miraji (1912–1949). His extraordinarily eclectic and wide-ranging Urdu translations of early and contemporary poets from East and West, from the Minnesänger to Walt Whitman, Pushkin to François Villon, Charles Baudelaire to Li Po, Catullus to Korean, Chinese, Laotian, and Japanese poets, which also appeared in periodicals like *Adabī dunyā* (*Literary World*, Lahore 1928) in the 1930s and '40s, reveal an eclectic, omnivorous and confident “thick” engagement with world poetry. These translations were often embedded in long historical-critical essays that performed an important world-literary pedagogical function, situating each poet or body of work within their historical and social context and making them the outcome of particular possibilities and not representatives of “national qualities.” The fact that, at least in some cases, Miraji largely translated or paraphrased existing essays without acknowledging his sources does not diminish his ambition or the scale of his achievement.

Miraji's translations were part of a comprehensive pedagogical effort to expand the vision and taste of Urdu readers “whose scope, he felt, was curbed by the narrow canon they embraced and understood as convention” (Patel 50). They employed Urdu poetic terms in places but also stretched Urdu's well established poetic language, particularly in the direction of “song-poems” (*gīt*), a term Miraji uses extensively.²⁹ In these translation-essays he explored and expanded the world in an intense cosmopolitan practice of reading, translation, and explanation that merged into his poetic practice.³⁰ Other Indian poetic traditions in Sanskrit, Hindi, and Bengali also became part of this translational exploration, broadening Miraji's sense of his own literary tradition.

If translating Whitman allowed Miraji to experiment with looser prosody, as in “Ae ‘ajnaabī!” (To a stranger!):

29 For instance, about songs from Lao, he writes that they “do not stick to any prosody [*radīf-kāfiya* or *baḥr*]. If any *ravānī* [quality of flow] is produced it is outside any rules. The beauty of these songs is in their imagination [*takhayyul*, which in Urdu also means imagery], which is always graceful [*ḥasīn*] and usually unexpected [*ghair-mutawaqqoʻ*]” (Miraji *Bāqiyat* 163).

30 “His translations from earlier poets became his poetry and his poetry filtered into his translations” (Patel 50).

O stranger!
 you don't know
 how longingly I looked upon you,
 No doubt it's you
 who I
 was seeking;
 (this comes to me as of a dream.)
 As your companion of joy
 I have lived somewhere
 Some part of life ...³¹

MIRAJI *Mashreq* 46

Translating Baudelaire, instead, made him grapple with densely packed synesthetic images, but also allowed him to point out that French literature was five decades ahead of English literature:

When closing my eyes in a magical trance,
 dreaming imaginary dreams,
 I inhale drafts from your scented breast
 it stirs feelings in my heart
 and my eyes see
 a stormy river in hell and a purple sunset
 unstopping.³²

MIRAJI *Mashreq* 133

In translating “exotic-erotic” poems from China, Japan, Korea, and South East Asia – from E. Powys Mathers’ *Eastern Love* English translations of earlier

31 “Ae ‘ajnaḥ! / tujhko nahīn is kī khabar, / dekhā tujhe kin ārzūon se abhī / be shak vahī hai tū / mujhe / thī jis kī ab tak justjū; / (ye bāt aise hai kī jaise khwāb ho!) / hamrāz-e ‘ishrat ho ke tere sāth / mainne guzārī hai kahīn, / kuch zindagī.”

“Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you, / You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me as of a dream,) / I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you ...” (Whitman).

32 “jab apnī ānkhon ko band karte hī, jaise aḥsūn ke nashe men, / ko’ī takhayyul ke khwāb dekhe / main nosh kartā hūn tere sīne se aīsī nakhat ke mast jhonke / kē dil ke jazbāt jin se machlen, / to merī ānkhon yē dekhtī hain / kē ik jahannum kī tez nadī hai aur agnī rukh shafaq kī / jo ek pal bhī nahīn ruktī.”

“Quand, les deux yeux fermés, en un soir chaud d’automne, / Je respire l’odeur de ton sein chaleureux, / Je vois se dérouler des rivages heureux / Qu’éblouissent les feux d’un soleil monotone” (Baudelaire, “Parfum exotique”).

French versions, – Miraji toned down both the erotic and the exotic and highlighted their song-like quality:

You said you wished
the lacquer and the sandal trees
to grow into a parasol
for me,
you said you wished
the sky to be my blue umbrella
with gold tracings,
but you did not say you wished yourself
to cover me.³³

POWYS MATHERS 96

In Miraji's translation, the lacquer and sandal trees more familiar trees (*śandal* and *safeda*), parasols become "umbrellas" (*chhātriān*, nicely alliterating with "cover", *chā jānā*), while the English verb to cover loses its sexual overtone.

This cosmopolitanism was not a game of catching up with the latest developments in Europe but rather a search for inspiring poets who belonged as much to the past as to the present, to the East as to the West. This direct poetic engagement through translation resembled T.S. Eliot's or Ezra Pound's or Tagore's. Both historical and transcending history in literary coevalness, Miraji's undertaking also prefigured the eclectic reading of later Indian modernists like Arun Kolatkar and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (see Zecchini's contribution).

The long translation-essay was not the only medium Miraji used. In the essay "Des des ke gīt" ("Songs from different countries," *Adabī duniyā* July 1938 and reprinted in *Bāqiyat* 177–217), Miraji playfully used radio technology to convey a sense of free mobility and reduced distances of time as well as place, indeed a dizzying whirlwind of possibilities. Since Miraji worked for All India Radio in Delhi for a while in the late 1930s, I imagine that the piece was first written for the radio or was anyway inspired by his experience there:

Human beings are natural searchers [*mutajassis*]. They are not content with limited thoughts and in a limited geographical environment. That's

33 "tum ne kahā thā kē tum chāhte ho / kē śandal aur safede ke per / mere li'e / chhātriān ban jā'en / tum ne kahā thā kē tum chāhte ho / kē āsmān merī / sunehrī jhālār vālī / nīlī chhatrī ho / lekin tum ne yih na kahā kē tum chāhte ho / kē tum khud mujh par chhā jā'o" (Miraji *Bāqiyat* 169–70).

why in order to acquire knowledge, wealth [the older reasons for travel according to Sa'di] and the beauty of poetry [*nağhme kâ husn*] today we're going on a poetic tour. And since this is the age of airwaves, we'll also adopt this manner of travel. Keep turning the knob of your radio:

We're speaking from Hindustan, and now we'll broadcast a poem by the famous [Bengali] poet Hirendranath Upadhyay. Its title is: Eternity ...

MIRAJI *Bāqiyat* 177

After a few poems by Tagore, "we turn towards the past" and the fifteenth-century poet Vidyapati, then to the Russian poets Anna Akhmatova, Pushkin, and Alexander Blok.

Modern poets from the West are obsessed with making poetry obscure. Who knows what the reason is, the cold climate there with its fog or the confusions created by the progress of civilization? It's true that the task of art is only to hint, but the hint must be right and clear. [...] We are speaking from France, now listen to the poem "*Rog/Malady*" by the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé ... François Villon ... We are talking about France, but we should now remember another country, this is why we are [now] speaking from Germany. It's a time of political upheavals, so no time for emotional or poetic expression. Still, we'll take some time and present a short poem by Rainer Maria Rilke (Silent moment). [...] Now we are speaking from Japan. What's the point of the dreadful and frightening news. Come, listen to a song poem from the lips of a Japanese geisha (Solitude) [...] Now we are speaking from China. Listen to two pieces. The name of the poet of the second piece is Sao Sao, the first is Fu Mi. [...] We are speaking from America and we want to recite for you a poem by Carol Sandburg ...

MIRAJI *Bāqiyat* 189–98

Miraji then "travels" to England, quoting poems by Shelley, Shakespeare, Siegfried Sassoon, and John Mansfield. "Poems from England are becoming too many, though another poetic nation lies by it. Turn the knob a little ... We are speaking from Ireland. Our song programme first begins with Oscar Wilde" (Miraji *Bāqiyat* 211–12). After a few more poets (James Stephens, Emily Brontë, and Thomas Moore), the programme ends as if suspended in the ether:

Every journey has an end. So, our poetic journey is over. But since we started with our own country I also wanted us to finish with a poem from

our own country. So let me recite a short poem of mine ... my poem ...
listen to my poem ... who are you?

MIRAJI *Bāqiyat* 217

Colonial critics had stressed the benefit of faithful translations from English poetry to “direct the Indian mind to the beauties of nature and to the tender feelings of the heart.”³⁴ Reviews of one such faithful translation of Goldsmith’s poems *The Hermit* and *The Deserted Village* had underlined that,

Works such as these will not only make a valuable addition to Hindi Literature but will tell people ignorant of English what stuff English poetry is made of. They will give them insight into that fine imagery, those delicate paintings of scenes and characters which are the peculiar attractions of English poetry, they will lead them from the land of the wild, the fantastic, the supernatural, the impossible with which so much of Oriental poetry and romance abounds into the regions of reason and reality, and lastly they will give them an opportunity of setting a right value upon foreign productions instead of blindly and therefore partially deciding in favour of works of indigenous art.³⁵

qtd. in PATHAK iv–v

But in the early twentieth century, translation came to be seen as a door to world literature, and English a medium, a *medium*, for the task. So while some, like Jawaharlal Nehru, viewed translation as a quick fix to update Indian literature, others saw it as helpfully disenchanting Indian readers about the excellence and centrality of English literature. It was in this spirit that the Malayalam critic and contemporary of Miraji, K. Balakrishna Pillai translated Ibsen’s *Ghosts*, Mérimée’s *Carmen*, stories by Maupassant, Chekhov, Daudet, and wrote on Proust, Gogol, Tokutomi, Freud, Futurism and Vorticism, Mayakovsky, Cubism, and so on. To quote Dilip Menon, in Pillai’s view “Malayalam literature had unfortunately chosen to look towards English literature unlike Japan, where French and Russian literatures were the benchmarks” (147).

34 See Fredrick Pincott in Pathak (“Opinion and Reviews,” viii).

35 Originally, review in *Aligarh Institute Gazette* 6 July 1886.

4 Conclusion

What experience of world literature does the periodical convey? This essay has considered three articulations of world literature in early twentieth-century India, located both in terms of language and medium – a confidently pan-Indian, Bengali-close English monthly (*The Modern Review*), would-be-national Hindi (Bakhshi's book, which started its life as essays in the monthly *Sarasvatī*), and an eclectic Urdu translation project (Miraji). The periodical was the platform in all three cases, yet the use of the medium, the experience of world literature that it created, and the vision it projected were strikingly different, allowing us to build on Hofmeyr and Ouyang's important insights.

In the English *Modern Review* world literature appears largely as “cut-and-paste” snippets, notes and articles re-printed and summarized from other periodicals. Given the magazine's interest in the wider world beyond England and Europe, particularly Asia, some of the literary gleanings did make those parts of the world visible and created some kind of familiarity and worldliness, yet without any systematic ambition. Moreover, by regularly printing reports of Rabindranath Tagore's travels and speeches, which were relayed by periodicals in other Indian languages, the *Modern Review* actively contributed to making him the first Indian living world poet.

In his Hindi book, Bakhshi drew upon the same network of periodicals but aimed at producing a more substantial and intellectually ambitious reflection on Indian and world literature. His enterprise was more critical and pedagogical, though his knowledge of literatures outside India and Europe was almost as thin as that of his Hindi readers.

Once again aimed at magazine readers and only recently collected in book form, Miraji's Urdu translations produced a much “thicker” and direct encounter with world poetry and were explicitly and purposefully eclectic. This eclecticism emerges most clearly in his radio essay, which compressed tens of poets within the space of one programme and crossed distances of time and place just by turning the knob a little.

Miraji shows that a peripheral mentality was not necessarily the only stance for Indian colonial writers and intellectuals. While theorists like Gisèle Sapiro would probably read this intensive inflow of translation as indexing a subordinate position, I argue that in fact it enabled the resubjection of colonized writers and readers as citizens of the world.³⁶ “It is only if the people of Kerala believe that the western world needs its support in continuing what it has done

36 Gibson-Graham speaks of resubjection and creating new discourses of the subject in their work with local communities in Australia: “our project of revaluing the local as a

to create this new world that they can be of any real assistance,” wrote Miraji’s contemporary Kesari Balakrishna Pillai (qtd. in Menon 142). Like Miraji, Pillai looked to English as a *medium* through which to reach further to the literatures of Europe – France, Russia, Scandinavia. This, Dilip Menon has argued, was a cosmopolitan stance that both undermined England’s supposed centrality but also countered the nationalist intoxication with past Indian glory. For Miraji and Pillai, translating and writing about world literature was a way to work through ideas of “Eastern” and “Western” literature and elaborate a non-colonial presence on the world stage. In “Aesthetics: western and eastern” (*Sundarkalā paśchātyavum paurastyavum*), Pillai wrote about the need to transcend the debilitating and futile distinctions between East and West which instituted hierarchy rather than mere difference. I think Miraji would have agreed.

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site of politics is not about ‘liberation’ from subjection as such, but about creating new discourses that *subject* in different ways, thus enabling subjects to assume power in new forms” (36). I argue that talking of world literature and claiming a place in world literature created a discourse that *subjected* Indian readers and writers in new, non-colonial ways.

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